Tipping the Tables

Automated rating, hybrid games

By Dave Bontempo and Frank Legato

Bring on the new, enhance the "old." Table games, the original industry kingpin, flaunts new fortifications. Some embrace slick devices, with Android phones and tablets becoming smart data-collection cameras. Others reflect automated bonusing, security and player rating capability. Another blends skill-based and classic games in a demographic melting pot.

Combined, it's a welcome boost for a sector sharing its once-exclusive prominence with slot machines, lounges and social-media platforms.

A crowd around the table once described people elbowing up to the craps and roulette arena. That has morphed into a projection that by 2019, more than 400 million people will regularly watch competitive video gaming. Many will be millennials, gaming's youth movement.

For table-game operators, this does not have to be an age-based passing of the torch. It can be a burgeoning market that they, by way of technology, tap.

Automate and Improve

Walker Digital Table Systems (WDTS), headquartered in Las Vegas with sales and support in Macau, provides innovative casino systems, tools and contents supporting the expanding global table games market. It empowers operators to maximize their table game productivity by automating the most iconic games—those played with live cards, live chips and live dealers.

Automation is the company's stock in trade.

Walker Digital embraces several dynamic industry trends, according to Neil Crossan, general manager of Asia operations. A big one is the uptick of live-dealt table games. The casino expansion in Asia, where baccarat is the dominant revenue-driver, fuels this surge.

The demand for automation, data collecting and bonusing for table game operations is another significant area. So is total game integrity, with counterfeit protection provided by systems that track gaming chips from the chip float to the bet spot. Automated table ratings comprise another major industry movement.

Into that backdrop comes one of WDTS' prime products, Perfect Pay. The company thinks it is, well, perfect.

"With automation comes rich data, business insights and never-before-seen capabilities such as cash chip rolling, insurance bet propositions by player position and off-table betting," Crossan says. "The Perfect Pay table generates ratings for player sessions that automatically—and exactly, in real time—log every wager for cash chip, program or promotional play including start time, stop time, bet amount, bet type, win/loss, turnover, rolling and many other dealer and game performance metrics. Ratings are directly integrated into any casino management system and detail true handle, house advantage, exact win/loss and insights into bet mix and patterns of game play."

Crossan says Perfect Pay supports total game protection from the time a bet is placed until it is paid, taken or exchanged in the chip tray. The casino is protected from bad actors on either side of the table. Capping, pinching and past posting are eliminated because the table generates an alert indicating when a bet changes at any point from when the first card is pulled to when the last bet is paid. If bets are overpaid or underpaid, the game will not resolve until errors are corrected. The chip tray checks for the correct balance at the end of each game and reports variances for any reason.

"Perfect Pay is an integrated table games system that uses radio frequency identification (RFID) and computer vision technology to track play and assist dealers to complete transactions quickly and without errors," Crossan says. "The system tracks every player bet, every chip and every dealer transaction in real time. Perfect Pay does this while remaining indistinguishable from a traditional table game.

"Perfect Pay Baccarat is the most comprehensive table automation solution available today. Now, WDTS is applying the Perfect Pay platform across all game types, enabling a total-floor product. We can provide comprehensive solutions to any table games operation in the world."

Crossan says a critical point of differentiation for his company is that table games automation and content leveraging RFID is Walker Digital's core business. Perfect Pay automates the most time-consuming and labor-intensive table game procedures.

"The gaming day roll has traditionally required a series of manual procedures that disrupt play and result in fewer games played," he indicates. "With Perfect Pay, an entire gaming floor rolls in just a few minutes without stopping play, manually closing or entering ratings, or starting a new shoe. Closers and openers are automatically generated and sent to integrated systems, player ratings are automatically closed and reopened, and the new gaming date is automatically updated across table and cage locations while players continue to place bets."